

# Your Baby's Hearing Screening Test



In the first few weeks of your baby's life, you will be offered a routine health check for your baby – a hearing screening test. The test uses quick and simple methods to check the hearing of all newborn babies.

### **Why screen my baby's hearing?**

One to two babies in every 1,000 are born with a hearing loss in one or both ears. It is not easy to identify that a young baby has a hearing loss. This hearing screening test will allow those babies who do have a hearing loss to be identified early. Early identification is known to be important for the development of the child. It also means that support and information can be provided to parents at an early stage.

### **No one in my family has a hearing loss. Does my baby still need to have the hearing screening test?**

Yes. It is important to screen all babies. Most babies born with a hearing loss are born into families with no history of hearing loss.

### **Will the hearing screening test be painful for my baby?**

No. It does not hurt and is not uncomfortable. The screening test will usually be done while your baby is asleep or settled.

### **What does the hearing screening test involve?**

A newborn hearing screener carries out the screening test. They place a small soft tipped earpiece in the outer part of your baby's ear which sends clicking sounds down the ear. When an ear receives sound, the inner part, known as the cochlea, usually produces an echo. The screening equipment can pick up this response. This is called the Automated Otoacoustic Emission (AOAE) screening test. The AOAE screening test only takes a few minutes.

## When will I get the results of the hearing screening test?

The results will be given to you at the time of the screening test.

## Why does my baby need a second hearing screening test?

A lot of babies need to have a second hearing screening test because the first screen didn't show a clear response from both of the baby's ears. This does not necessarily mean that your baby has hearing loss.

### Reasons for having a second screening test are:

- Hearing loss
- Your baby may have been unsettled at the time of screening
- There may have been background noise when the screening test was carried out
- Your baby may have fluid or a temporary blockage in the ear after the birth. This is very common and will pass with time.

The second screen will be carried out in a clinic by a screener usually within 7-14 days from the first screen. If again the screen does not show a clear response, your baby will be offered a different hearing screen usually at the same clinic appointment (AABR – see next page).

## Consenting to the screen

By allowing your baby's hearing to be screened you are consenting for the hearing screens to be carried out and diagnostic hearing tests should this be required. Also for the information to be shared with you Health Visitor, GP and other health professionals directly involved with the screening. The details of you and your baby, the screening and, if required, any hearing tests following the screen will be kept

on a central NHS computer database used by the NHS Newborn Hearing Screening Programme. This information will be used for monitoring the success and evaluating the benefits of the screen. All requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 will be met during the storage and use of the data.



## What does the Automated Auditory Brainstem Response (AABR) screening test involve?

This involves three small sensors being placed on your baby's head and neck. Soft headphones, especially made for babies, are placed over your baby's ears and a series of clicking sounds are played. The hearing screening equipment tells us how well your baby's ears respond to sound. The AAOE screening test takes a few minutes however the AABR screening test can take between 5 and 30 minutes. Again this test will not hurt or be uncomfortable for your baby.

The screening test is easier to carry out if your baby is settled or asleep. The following may help your baby settle during the screening test: If possible, feed your baby shortly before or during the screening test, ensure you have the things you may need to make your baby comfortable and happy.

## **My baby seems to be responding to sound. Does my baby still need an AABR screening test?**

Most babies are found to have no hearing loss after the AABR screening test but it is still very important that your baby has the AABR screen. This is because babies who have hearing loss will usually react to some sounds. If your baby does have hearing loss it is important that you find out as soon as possible.

## **What do the results mean if the AABR hearing screening test shows a clear response from both of my baby's ears?**

This means that your baby is unlikely to have a hearing loss. Remember that children can develop or acquire a hearing loss later on so it is important to check your child's hearing as they grow up. You can use the two checklists of sounds that your baby should react to and the types of sounds that they should make as they grow older. These checklists are in your red book.

If you have any concerns about your child's hearing, discuss them with your Health Visitor or family Doctor. Your child's hearing can be tested at any age.

## **What happens if the AABR screening test does not show a clear response from one or both of my baby's ears?**

If the AABR does not show a clear response from one or both of your baby's ears you will be referred to your local Audiology department. They will carry out special tests to measure your baby's hearing. Again, this often happens and does not necessarily mean that your baby has a hearing loss.

There may be a number of other reasons why the second screen could not record a clear response from one or both of your baby's ears. Further tests by an Audiologist will give you better information about your baby's hearing.

**What is the likelihood of my baby having a hearing loss if the AABR screening test does not record clear responses?**

Most babies will record clear responses to sound at the AABR screening test and at the further tests carried out by an Audiologist. However, there is a possibility that your baby may have a hearing loss.

Nationally, about one in 25 babies whose AABR screening test does not record clear responses may have a hearing loss in one or both ears. Finding out that your baby has a hearing loss means that you and your baby will get advice and support right from the start.

## Where can I get further information?

If you would like more information about your baby's hearing screening test, you can contact:

**Polly Strauss (Newborn Hearing Local Coordinator)**

**Telephone 07825 966616**

**email: [Polly.Strauss@nhs.net](mailto:Polly.Strauss@nhs.net)**

**or visit the hearing screening website**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/newborn-hearing-screening-programme-overview>



## Leaving hospital without a screening test

We aim to offer the first hearing screen to all babies before discharge. However, if we have not managed to screen your baby before discharge or if you need a second screen the Newborn Hearing Team will contact you at home within seven to ten days.

If by any chance you have not been contacted by the Team by day ten, please contact:

**Polly Strauss (Newborn Hearing Local Coordinator)**

**Telephone 07825 966616**

**email: [Polly.Strauss@nhs.net](mailto:Polly.Strauss@nhs.net)**

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#### Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

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